

Idaho Travel Council
October 2 & 3, 2008
Riggins, Idaho

Council Members Present

Paul Norton, Region I
Frances Conklin, Region II
John May, Region III
John Webster, Region IV
Brent Gillette, Region VII
J.J. Jaeger, Member At-Large

Council Members Absent/Excused

Bill Code, Region V
Tadd Jenkins Region VI

Department of Commerce Staff Present

Karen Ballard, Tourism Administrator
Tina Caviness, Tourism
Cathy Bourner, Tourism
Mitch Knothe, Tourism
Peg Owens, Tourism

Guests Present

Amy Koenig, McCall Chamber
Kelly Dahlquist, NCITA
Josh Mercaldo, drake/cooper
Bill Drake, drake/cooper
Kristine Andrew, drake/cooper
Lorraine Roach, Hingston-Roach Group
Michelle Peters, Hells Canyon Visitors Bureau
Deb Smith, LCV-Hells Canyon Visitors Bureau
Rick Certano, Brundage Mountain
Larry Barnard, City of Riggins

Thursday, October 2, 2008

Meeting called to order by Chairman Brent Gillette, followed by welcome and introductions.

Motion – It was moved (May) and seconded (Conklin) that the minutes of the July 28-29, 2008 Idaho Travel Council meeting be approved as written. Motion passed.

Budget Update – Karen Ballard reviewed the budget and current financial statement with the council. She reported that the budget is based on a projected 3% growth, and we are currently at 2.62%. Governor Otter has directed state agencies to hold back 1% of their budgets. The Idaho Travel Council budget is exempt from this hold back because funding comes from a dedicated tax. Ballard told the council that based on the economy, she anticipates revenues to continue to be flat. The council discussed a variety of options where expenses could be pared down, trying to maintain marketing dollars. Frances Conklin asked Ballard to report to the council at the January meeting on criteria used for special promotion assistance.

Motion – It was moved (May) and seconded (Webster) to approve the budget as presented. Motion passed.

Marketing Plan Review – Bill Drake, drake/cooper, reviewed the *Idaho Travel Council Marketing Plan - 08-09* with the council. During the review, John Webster noted that Idaho ranks second to last in the west for tourism spending. Drake reviewed Idaho's niche audiences and told the council that with a limited budget for Idaho tourism marketing, success will come through market focus and proper channeling. Research shows that although there is interest in Idaho from just about every state in the country, over 88% of all inquiries have come from persons living in the west or mid-west. Drake

reviewed the marketing objectives with the council. Josh Mercaldo told the council that because it is critical to maintain online resources for potential Idaho travelers, a total of 15 different tourism sites are currently online and marketed using industry best practices including search engine and keyword optimization and social marketing. He also reported that \$35,000 has been allocated for data analysis using the Longwoods Travel USA online research panel. The study will reflect the 2008 data and will target travelers to Idaho from a quarterly randomized travel panel of 500,000 annually. Bill Drake reviewed the FY09 Budget Summary, which totals \$3.4m and includes the year-round program, information delivery and advertising and promotion with the council.

The council expressed their endorsement and support for the marketing plan. Chairman Gillette said Sun Valley Company is receiving an increase in calls from Canada. Because it is such an important market for Idaho, he asked the council to consider a concentrated marketing effort in Canada.

Update on Winter Campaign – Josh Mercaldo reviewed the winter program with the council. Tactical elements of the program include a regional newspaper insert, which will drop 350,000 units early in November in Seattle, Portland, Spokane, Missoula, Calgary, Salt Lake City and Boise. Extra copies will be printed for use at tradeshow and as a winter fulfillment piece.

Mercaldo reported to the council that Idaho's snowmobile program is a success because of leveraging dollars. This year's program includes continued involvement in the Tri-State "Sled the Rockies" co-op with Wyoming and Montana and an in-state co-op comprised of dollars from ITC grantees. Destinations participating in the co-op receive qualified consumer leads for their own marketing/fulfillment. Mercaldo presented a slide show on the Un-hibernate campaign placed with Forbes Life – Ski.

Spring/Summer Creative Review – Bill Drake reviewed the spring/summer creative program with the council. He reported that the target audience will be families, boomers, and niche in the 11 western states, including Canada for golf. Examples of ads that will run were shown to the council. The overall spring magazine budget is \$1.9 million.

Top 20 Scenic Drives in the Northern Rockies – Lorraine Hingston-Roach reported to the council on **Top 10**, a strategic marketing and public awareness program to package and promote three All-American Roads, adjacent National Parks/Recreation Areas, and National Historic Trails that connect them and aid Scenic Byway travelers with an interest in driving, heritage/culture, and outdoor recreation. The project includes web site, advertising, media program, driving map, and tracking of byway visitation/economic impact. The project is overseen by a Steering Committee representing key partners. Hingston-Roach reviewed a scope of work and timeline with the council.

National Geographic Map Guide Project – Karen Ballard updated the council on the project, which involves the creation of a print and digital-format map guide highlighting the authentic, distinctive and extraordinary cultural, historical and natural resources of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Lorraine Hingston-Roach said that there is a need for project management and a regional marketing organization. Ballard said that ITC funds provide some financial assistance to the project. Council member John Webster said the end result should be community support in lieu of state financial support.

International Markets Discussion – Herve Duxin, International Representative, France, reported to the council that the French market ranks number three among the European market with 27% more French to the United States. Better flight connections from France to the U.S., as well as a new direct flight launched in July, have contributed to the increase. Duxin told the council that he works with the RMI staff and that France is number one for Rocky Mountain Tours, a receptive operator based in Colorado. Idaho is in most of the tour operator's catalogs and featured in more than forty of them. Duxin told the council that it is his privilege to represent Idaho to the French market.

Mitch Knothe reported to the council on the Scandinavian market. He participated in the September 1-5 Scandinavian Mission organized by Rocky Mountain International. All participants agree that the mission was a great success and that we are very well positioned in Sweden. Interest in Denmark is strong and we have a good base of journalists and tour operators to work with. A workshop and seminar was held in Copenhagen with 41 travel agents attending and two sessions were held in Osby and Jonkoping Sweden. A Discover America event in Goteborg was one of the busiest travel agent events held with over 130 agents in attendance. Knothe told the council that most visitors from the Scandinavian market are individuals versus groups.

2010 Strategy – Mitch Knothe reported to the council that Idaho's 2010 Olympic Strategy is modeled after the 2002 strategy. He said more training and sponsorship opportunities need to emerge from Idaho's ski resorts. Knothe also told the council that now is a good time to go after journalists to begin stories about Idaho.

Idaho Film Office – Peg Owens gave the council a history of Idaho's Film Office, which was started in 1987. By 2005 some states were offering incentives and in 2006 then Representative Jana Kemp came forward to start asking things of Idaho's legislature. Idaho's incentive program passed the 2008 legislature but was not funded. Karen Ballard told the council that film festivals have become increasingly more popular and Idaho supports those festivals with limited financial assistance when possible. Owens asked if a council member would be willing or available to accompany her and Kathleen Haase to the Sundance Film Festival in January. Chairman Gillette said he thought this would be possible.

Region II Update – Kellie Dahlquist reported to the council that the first two of a series of five travel casts will be up in November or December. Michelle Peters, Hells Canyon Visitor Bureau, reported to the council that they will host the Outdoor Writers Association FAM and it is anticipated that about 100 writers will participate. Karen Ballard encouraged Peters to work with Kellie Kluksdal, who handles public relations for Idaho's tourism programs.

White Water Park – Former council member Judd DeBoer told the council about a white water park being developed on a stretch of the Little Salmon River for kayakers. He said that the park should be open within the next two years.

Yellowstone Business Partnership and USDA Study – Lorraine Hingston-Roach reported to the council on findings of a study, begun in July, of six counties in southeast Idaho. The study was conducted by The Hingston Roach Group, a tourism and economic development consulting firm based in Idaho. The study includes data analysis; an inventory of regional tourism and recreation assets by county; a survey and interviews of regional business, recreation and tourism leaders; site visits; and a report of findings and recommendations. Key findings, implications and preliminary recommendations from the study will be presented at a three-state Seasonality Summit on October 7-8 in Cody, Wyoming. Hingston-Roach will present recommended strategies to increase off-season revenues and investment in southeast Idaho at the summit and encouraged the council to visit the Yellowstone Business Partnership web site: www.yellowstonebusiness.org for more information.

Governor's Conference on Recreation & Tourism – Karen Ballard led a discussion about the format of the conference and the need to change the agenda to more fully meet the needs of Idaho's tourism and recreation industry. The focus will be on more classes, workshops and training sessions at this year's conference in Sun Valley, May 5-8.

Friday, October 3, 2008

Because council members Jaeger, Code, and Jenkins were unable to attend Friday's meeting, a quorum did not exist. Karen Ballard and Cathy Bournier led those members present through a discussion of proposed grant program administrative guideline/rule changes. An in-depth discussion was held and proposed changes as a result of the discussions will be presented to the entire council when a quorum exists for action. Ballard reported to the council that she will be in Twin Falls and will have a dinner meeting, along with John Webster, with Senator Dean Cameron to lay groundwork for the introduction of the proposed changes that will be presented to the legislature in January.

Items the council requested be on the January and March agenda include a presentation by the Tax Commission on 2% collections, research, Special Olympics, and the Governor's Project 60.

Future Meeting Dates:

January 13, 2009 – Joint meeting with Economic Advisory Council, Owyhee Plaza, Boise

January 14, 2009 – Idaho Travel Council meeting, Owyhee Plaza, Boise

March – Dates/Location to be determined (Note: at time of preparation of these minutes, it has been decided that meeting will be held March 17 & 18, 2009 in Twin Falls/Burley/Pomerelle.)